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Thank you the Public Health Committee for the opportunity to be here today. My name is Susanna Jalkut and I am board certified in Pediatrics. I am in private practice as a general pediatrician and a small business owner. I am happy to be here today to testify in support for House Bill 6158 – An Act concerning Vaccine Distribution.

Our Practice, Pediatric Healthcare Associates, operates 6 pediatric offices in Fairfield County staffed with over 20 physicians and nurse practitioners. We currently employ over 150 people and provide comprehensive pediatric care to our patients on 365 days a year. In addition, our patients have access to classes to support Breastfeeding mothers, Prenatal Nutrition and CPR training. Our offices are connected through a state of the art electronic health record system, which required a significant outlay of capital to install.

In addition to my daily practice of medicine, I serve as a Member of our Board of Directors and the Chair of our Finance Committee. In these roles, I have struggled with the significantly negative financial impact that the State of Connecticut vaccine mandate has had on our business. This unexpected and rushed legislation which went into effect last year has dealt a severe financial blow to our small business. Like many other small business owners, we are still trying to cope with the trying financial times that we live in, recovering from the Great Recession.

Pediatricians historically have very small margins to operate their practices. It is very difficult to absorb the tremendous loss of revenue without a significant impact to our operations. Since we operate six locations in Fairfield County, our overhead is higher than many other practices. Last year, we absorbed a 13% increase in the premiums for the health insurance coverage we offer to our employees. Along with the removal of our choice of vaccine supplier, the vaccine mandate increased our administrative burden. My nurses have a spreadsheet to consult before they administer vaccines to make sure they are complying with the state regulations. This increased work which we were mandated to do has not been reimbursed by the state of Connecticut. If my nurses are spending more time in the administration of this mandated system, then they are less able to be providing other vital nursing tasks for our pediatric patients.

The abrupt and unprecedented loss of revenue to our business came directly from the decision of the state of Connecticut to remove our choice of vaccine supplier. As I look at decreasing revenue and increased overhead expenses, I may need to lay off employees to help close this gap. Not only does the

State of CT's decision now threaten our ability to continue to employ our current staff, but we may also need to cut back services to our patients. We may choose not to provide influenza vaccine next year due to the overwhelming administrative burden the state now demands.

Pediatricians in Connecticut are proud to be doing an excellent job of vaccinating the children of Connecticut. This vaccine mandate has made my job as a physician and a small business owner harder. Last year, I was not afforded the opportunity to advise the legislators on how this decision will negatively impact pediatric care. My advice is simple, Bring back Vaccine choice to the State of Connecticut. Thank you.

Susanna K. Jalkut, MD